

# Orson Hyde's *Frontier Guardian*

A Mormon editor chronicles the westward movement  
through Kanesville, Iowa

by Jean Trumbo







SHSI (IOWA CITY). FROM ROUTE FROM LIVERPOOL TO GREAT SALT LAKE VALLEY, ED. JAMES LINFORTH (1855)

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Kanesville was a small, frontier settlement founded by Mormon emigrants in the area of Pottawattamie County that is now Council Bluffs. To the west lay the Missouri River and the Mormon Trail, vast western lands and California goldfields. To the east were thousands of emigrants fleeing religious persecution or personal disappointment, or simply seeking a better way of life. The story of Orson Hyde and the *Frontier Guardian* is the story of a great spiritual migration—and of a newspaper editor's vision of a great frontier town. Just as Kanesville was positioned between the East and the West, so was Hyde caught between two roles—Mormon leader and frontier editor.

Hyde had little experience in journalism. He had started the *Frontier Guardian* to provide fellow members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the information they needed about their Church and their inevitable westward emigration to Utah. As an elder and one of the Council of Twelve Apostles (the governing quorum of the Mormon Church), he held a formidable role in Kanesville and among his Utah-bound brethren.

Religion had long been a driving force in Hyde's life. It provided not only spiritual direction and comfort, but it had helped him rise from poverty to a position of influence and power. Born January 8, 1805, in Oxford, Connecticut, Hyde was orphaned at age eight and sent to live with a farm family. At 18 he left the farm with his few possessions in a knapsack and walked 600 miles to an Ohio woolen mill, saving his daily wages for his education.

Raised as a Methodist, he first served as a Campbellite pastor. But at age 26 he was converted to Mormonism and was baptized by Mormon founder Joseph Smith. His leadership ability—and perhaps a gift for salesmanship—enabled Hyde to shine as a preacher and a Mormon missionary.

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**“Entrance to Kanesville,”** by artist Frederick Piercy, 1853. Piercy called the town “a very dirty, unhealthy place” but “a great place for bargains” because many emigrants already “sick of the journey by the time they have arrived at Kanesville . . . sell out by auction in the street.”



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the chief publicity organ for the Mormon Church, the *Millennial Star* challenged anti-Mormon rumors promulgated by many English newspapers. Believing that such prejudice endangered Mormon lives, Hyde took his role as advocate and protector seriously during his four-month editorship. Later, he journeyed to the Holy Land, inspired by what he described as a vision of the Lord that came to him one evening "like clouds of light."

Returning to the United States, he reached Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1846, just as his fellow Mormons were fleeing violence and oppression and beginning a monumental trek to a yet unknown refuge in which they could practice their religion. Organized into companies of hundreds, fifties, and tens, Mormons had begun crossing southern Iowa, setting up temporary way stations and camps for others who would follow. They reached the Missouri River in June and settled first on the west bank, and then, when conflicts arose with the Omaha Indians, on the east. They intended to stay in the Kanesville area only long enough to rest and collect the members still traveling from the east. But the war against Mexico took 500 Mormon recruits, leaving the remaining emigrants waiting for enough stamina and manpower to continue the trip.

Meanwhile, dozens of hamlets or clusters of farms developed up and down the Missouri. One of them, Miller's Hollow, was soon renamed Kanesville (after Thomas Kane, a sympathetic non-Mormon, or "Gentile," from Philadelphia), and would become the hub of Mormon settlements. In April 1847, church leader Brigham Young started west with the first party of Mormons. Young entrusted Orson Hyde to preside over the remaining flock and to ultimately guide them to Utah.

**K**anesville grew quickly in 1848, and by February 1849 Hyde had founded the *Frontier Guardian* as a conduit for Young's spiritual directives and as a unifying voice for the community. He positioned church affairs prominently in the newspaper, filling the front page with church

matters, theological discussions, missionary news, and epistles from leaders in Salt Lake. Typically, the epistles lauded the progress made in settling Salt Lake and urged the Kanesville group to follow as quickly as possible.

"Being located on the extreme frontier," Hyde explained in the first issue, "the *Guardian* will be able to give the earliest reliable information from our settlement in California, and in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake." He intended for the paper to be the official beacon for Mormons. (Indeed, some 30,000 Saints would pass through Kanesville between 1846 and 1853,

nearly a fourth of them from Britain.) And under the title of "President of the Church east of the Rocky Mountains," he intended "to give counsel to the Church in the State, and act as agent in many things, for the Church in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake." Hyde seemed fully aware of the importance of the *Guardian* and of his own editorial voice: "the matter that flows from our pen will . . . meet the eyes of thousands, friend and foe."

Hyde's influence extended to the secular affairs as well, for there was little distinction between the issues of the Mormon Church and the political, social, and economic issues of Kanesville. Both Church and town provided refuge for the Mormons. Ideally, Gentiles would not interfere with the Mormons in far western Iowa. The fledgling state of Iowa

was only beginning to organize a government, so the Mormons were generally free to plot their own political course in their frontier community as they gathered for their trek farther west.

As community leader, Hyde was well suited to be an editor, because a local newspaper in the mid-19th century helped develop a town site, provided a community voice, and watched over the town's social, moral, commercial, and cultural growth. Hyde understood well the power of the printed word for uniting—and promoting—a community. For Mormon refuge or not, Kanesville became part of the California gold rush. And through his enthusiastic guidance, the *Frontier Guardian* also became a "booster" newspaper, promoting Mormon businesses and encouraging both Gentile and Mormon emigrants to outfit their overland expeditions in Kanesville.

SHS (FROM COUNCIL BLUFFS NONPAREIL, JULY 24, 1932, P. 11)



**As Mormon elder and newspaper editor, Orson Hyde wielded considerable power in Kanesville and the surrounding Mormon settlements.**



# The Frontier Guardian.

BY ORSON HYDE

KANESVILLE IOWA, FRIDAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1851.

VOLUME III.---NUMBER 8.

Through the *Guardian* pages, travelers and settlers learned about the weather, politics, local merchandise and prices. News of births, deaths, and weddings appeared, so did occasional fiction and poetry (some of Hyde's poems appeared under pseudonyms). Although Hyde was a celebrity in Kanesville and controlled what the paper published, he did not disclose much of his private life through the *Guardian's* pages. He was, however, generous in sharing his convictions, observations, and politics.

"The press is a powerful engine, for good or for evil, and calculated to make a deep and lasting impression upon the community where it is," he told his readers in the first issue. "The actions of both old and young, male and female, to a great extent, are directed and controlled by this agent that speaks with a thousand tongues. A wise head, a mind that knows not fear, and that will not be fettered, and a heart stored with 'good will to man' should be the fundamental qualifications of him who is destined, through the press, to give tone and color to public sentiment."

Hyde also considered the *Guardian* an important instrument for educating isolated Mormon youth. "Being situated upon the extreme borders of civilization, in a wilderness country," he continued, "where the means and facilities for improvement in science and learning are not so available . . . it will give us great satisfaction to aid, by all laudable means in our power, in an enterprise so important as that of the education of our youth."

If Kanesville had any disadvantages, Hyde never mentioned them. The *Guardian* claimed that the area possessed "the richest soil in the state," noting that "several good judges, who have lately visited this section of country, have pronounced it the paradise of this state, for fertility and luxuriance." The newspaper also extolled Kanesville as an emigrant's utopia: "The climate here is very healthy also, as a general thing the atmosphere is clear and cool, and very bracing to the human system; these, with many other advantages too numerous to mention, we think cannot fail to be duly appreciated by any and every person who are on the move, in pursuit of a home in the west."

It is not surprising that the *Guardian* painted such a glowing picture of what was probably a grim frontier town. Editor Hyde was Kanesville's chief civic, economic, religious, and social architect. Given the amount of nurturing energy he devoted to Kanesville, it is fair to assume that he viewed it with little objectivity. But not everyone shared Hyde's rose-colored vision. Emigrant diarists described 1849 Kanesville as a "scrubby town of 80 to 100 log cabins" with "one tavern, one church and two groceries." Another writer found it a "very dirty, unhealthy place."

Paradise or mud hole, Kanesville had a newspaper, and it looked similar to many 19th-century newspapers. The four-page paper was about 14 inches wide, with six columns of dense, hand-set type. The type and even the headlines were small enough to draw a squint, even from readers with good eyesight. Every other Wednesday, the paper was printed and distributed to the predominantly Mormon community. John Gooch was the printer and typesetter. Hyde appreciated Gooch's dexterity; "his long, bony fingers can pick up type as fast as a chicken can pick up corn," Hyde wrote. And he valued his stability: "Is it not a miracle that a printer has remained in one county a whole year!" Apparently Gooch was not afflicted by the wanderlust that kept so many typesetters and printers on the move in the West.

Hyde hired Daniel Mackintosh as assistant editor in November 1849. Mackintosh took over when Hyde was on trips to Salt Lake. Mackintosh was capable, never failing to get the paper out on time, but he was reticent to take a stand when issues arose. In fact, Mackintosh apologized for not being as verbally skilled or as qualified to offer an opinion as Hyde. He also apologized for a lack of editorial material when Hyde was out of town, as if the wheels of Kanesville drew to a screeching halt when the colorful editor was gone. Whether modest or simply overshadowed by





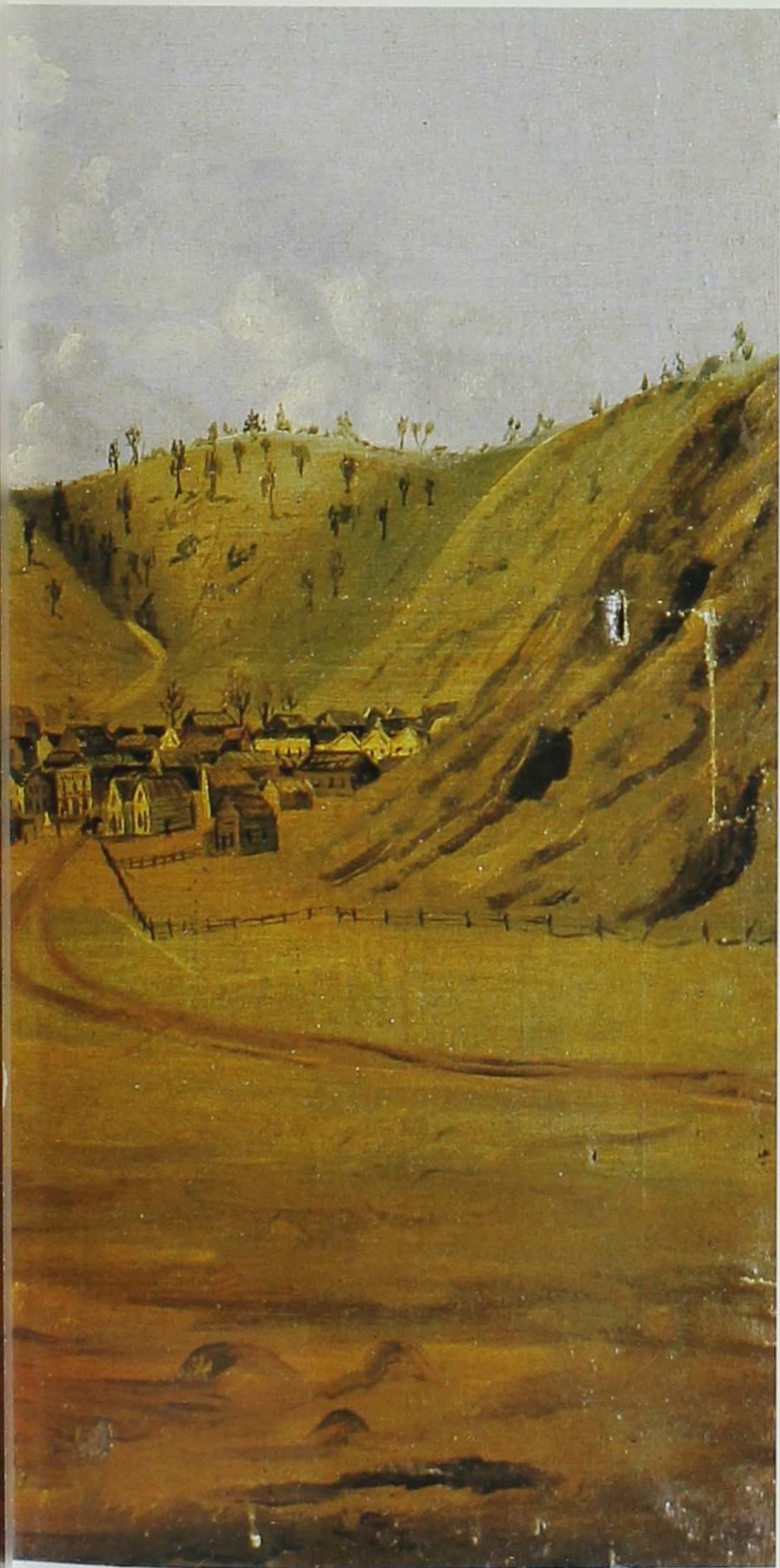
SHSI (DES MOINES)

**A**nother view of Hyde's community, probably soon after its name changed from Kanesville to Council Bluffs. Besides Kanesville, there were many, much smaller Mormon settlements tucked into the surrounding hills and valleys. This unsigned oil painting, attributed to Council Bluffs artist George Simons, is in the State Historical Society of Iowa collections. Simons painted and sketched numerous scenes of the area.

Hyde, Mackintosh seemed as insecure about his abilities as editor Hyde was confident of his own.

Confidence aside, Hyde was shrewd enough to realize from the outset that in order to survive, the *Guardian* had to be treated as any other business or investment. True, the *Guardian* was a Mormon paper





with church affairs positioned prominently on the front page, but church tithing could not cover the cost of producing a newspaper. Hyde needed subscribers. He relied most on his Mormon readers to buy subscriptions for \$2 or barter.

But Hyde had a larger audience in mind. As a con-

duit for Mormon news, the *Guardian* could serve the Saints scattered throughout the United States and Britain. Because Kaneshville was a gateway to the west, it could also serve non-Mormon emigrants planning their journeys. To reach these potential readers, the *Guardian* had assorted agents—one traveling between Kaneshville and St. Joseph, another through the southern states, some as far east as New York, and one in southern Texas. Because the attrition rate for agents was high, it is likely that the *Guardian's* distribution was somewhat inconsistent.

Yet hardly an issue slipped by without Hyde's pleas to subscribers. He promised truth based on a platform of independence. He promoted the printed word in ensuring freedom of speech and freedom from oppression. He provided information on the movements and policies within the Mormon Church. When all intellectual, political, and spiritual appeals were exhausted, he turned to heartfelt, personal pleas, reminding citizens that his role as a preacher was hardly lucrative, netting him less than \$40 in donations in four years. Certainly those who shared the benefit of his editorial and religious toils, Hyde cajoled, could find it in their hearts (and pockets) to subscribe so that their editor and elder might properly support himself.

Besides subscriptions, Hyde needed advertising revenue. The first year of publication was strictly hand to mouth. He charged \$1 for ads of 16 lines or less (or repeats for 50 cents) and 50 cents for marriage announcements. With only one-eighth of the pages filled with advertising (most of it local), Hyde could expect less than \$25 per issue from advertising revenue. Indeed, maintaining a staff of two on a budget based mainly on promises was a tremendous accomplishment. But by the next year advertising had doubled. Much of it targeted the emigrants—gold miners and settlers. Hyde accepted ads from towns as distant as St. Louis, and as competitive as the outfitting centers of St. Joseph and Independence, Missouri.

"The season of emigration will soon open," he reminded merchants in February 1849, "and outfitting for the mountains and 'gold regions' will soon commence. Our business men in all parts of the country would do well to advertise their business and prices, and if possible, put them so low as to induce new comers to postpone their purchases till they arrive at the Bluffs. 'A nimble sixpence is better than a slow shil-





SHIRLEY MONES

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ling,' and we would gladly encourage the home trade, if we can do it without doing injustice to the new comer and emigrant."

Although there were competing routes west, Hyde promoted the route that would benefit Kanesville the most—the north side of the Platte River Trail. Thousands of Mormons and Gentiles would follow this shallow, broad river that runs more than 1,000 miles. The banks on either side became the primary trail to Oregon, California, and Utah. Mormons bound for Utah stuck primarily to the north side, hoping to avoid mingling with Gentile gold seekers—the bachelors and absentee husbands who in the late 1840s joined the westward migration of farm families and Mormons. Historian Merrill J. Mattes estimates that between 1849 and 1853, some 60,000 emigrants chose this northern route.

The *Guardian* enthusiastically promoted the north Platte route (that closest to Kanesville), arguing that it shaved several hundred miles off the trip and was free of cholera and other disease.

"Pass along this extreme north route, and but few graves will be found along the line," the newspaper observed in January 1850, "but the graves on the more southern

routes are not few nor far between." Hyde published numerous accounts from emigrants testifying that the north route provided safer passage through Indian territory, and lush vegetation to sustain livestock and teams.

Besides promoting the north Platte route, the *Guardian* gave more specific advice. Take two good oxen and one to three yoke of cows per wagon, emigrants read in Hyde's paper; oxen could best withstand the difficult trail conditions and were strong enough to pull prairie schooners. Take provisions of 125 pounds of "bread stuffs" per person and 25 pounds of bacon and sugar, the *Guardian* recommended; the average wagon could accommodate 1,850 pounds of freight and three people.

As far as Hyde was concerned, copies of the *Frontier Guardian* were also essential provisions. Those

who didn't bother to take the *Guardian* with them were asking for trouble. "Gold hunters, just think of this idea once," Hyde warned, "and then leave for those enchanted regions without a regular file of Mormon papers if you dare risk it. We tell you the Mormons found the gold there, and now don't call us superstitious if we ask you to supply yourselves with plenty of our papers as an essential part of your outfit."

Most of the advertising was designed with the California emigrant in mind. Advertisers promised "another chance for the gold hunter" and called their stores "ensigns of the west." Kanesville merchant J. E. Johnson, for example, played on the momentum of the gold rush to promote his "Emporium of the West." His ad proclaimed: "More Gold Discovered! Tremendous Excitement! A New Variety Store!"

Hyde understood well the local business potential presented by "thousands and tens of thousands" of gold seekers needing provisions. "We have no hesi-

tancy in assuring our readers that every article needed in the Gold Mines, from a crowbar to a baconed porker, can all be had here at equally as low rates as can be purchased on the Mississippi," Hyde an-

nounced in 1849. "It is our candid opinion that he can purchase . . . his entire outfit in the little town of Kanesville at a better rate than he can purchase them in St. Louis or in any other of the Eastern cities, considering the trouble, expense of transportation and risk."

At least one visitor disagreed, describing Kanesville as "a very dear place to make an outfit for the plains, notwithstanding the assertions of holders of property and merchants there to the contrary. They assure emigrants that their wisest plan is to take their money there to purchase their outfit; but I hope few will believe them, for as there is not much competition they get prices the very reverse of their consciences."

The 1849 emigration season was Kanesville's first experience as an outfitting town. When the last train left in June, Hyde marveled at the majestic site of wagons crossing the plains, taking with them "the Yankee

## MORE GOLD DISCOVERED! TREMENDOUS EXCITEMENT! A NEW VARIETY STORE.

J. E. JOHNSON, would respectfully inform the citizens of Kanesville and adjoining counties, and Emigrants to **Salt Lake, California and Oregon** generally, and every individual person in particular; that he is constantly receiving and will keep constantly on hand for sale at his **LARGE and commodious, NEW FRAME STORE,** where he has just opened at the **SIGN of**

**EMPORIUM OF THE WEST.**

BOTH PAGES: FRONTIER GUARDIAN, MAY 1, 1850



Now's the time to Buy Cheap Goods.

**NEEDHAM & FERGUSON**  
OF THE  
**DESERET HOUSE.**

OR



Have just received their  
**Spring Stock of Goods,**

Consisting of a large and well selected lot of Prints, Ginghams, Alpaccas, Broadcloths, Cassimeres, Satinets, Jeans, Linseys, &c., &c, of the latest Styles, which will be sold as cheap as can be bought in any city on the Missouri River. Also a great variety of Fancy Goods, Bonnets, Hats and Caps, &c., and the largest and best lot of **BOOTS & SHOES**, ever brought into this market. Also a large quantity of Groceries well suited for emigration to Salt Lake and California. Please give us a call, and we are sure our goods will recommend themselves.

Remember the  
**BEE HIVE.**

Where it is No Trouble to Show Goods.  
N. B. A liberal reduction will be made to wholesale buyers, and those buying their outfit for Salt Lake.

Kanesville, May 1, 1850.

**WANTED.**

A good new milch cow wanted, enquire of Mr. Gooch, at this office. al7

**EPICURES ATTENTION.**

**G**ENTLEMEN and Ladies, can have Breakfast, Dinner or Supper for 15 cents per meal, (at the usual meal hours,) at Gooch's, 1st door east of the Printing office. Also two or three boarders accommodated on reasonable terms.

JOHN GOOCH, Jr.

Kanesville, March 6, 1850.

Advertisements from the *Frontier Guardian* (above and opposite page) lured gold miners with claims of goods "sold as cheap as can be bought in any city on the Missouri," and lured Mormons with liberal discounts for "buying their outfit for Salt Lake." The *Guardian's* typesetter and printer, John Gooch, apparently was seeking other income sources besides Hyde's wages. Note Gooch's small ads above selling a "good new milch cow" and advertising for boarders and "epicures."

with his machinery, the southern with his colored attendant—the Englishman with all kinds of mechanic's tools—the farmer, the merchant, the doctor, the minister, and almost everything necessary for a settlement in a new country." Hyde published optimistic emigrant letters that echoed his wonder at the "continual string of wagons" stretching as far as the eye could see, moving peacefully across the plains.

Yet even as Kanesville thrived as an outfitting town for the hopeful west-bound emigrant, the town also became a harbor for the "turnarounds" or "go backs." A good portion of those who "jumped off" in Kanesville never made it to their destination. In May 1849, the *Guardian* reported that more than 4,000 wagons had passed through Fort Kearney that season, but faced with high water on the Platte, many "turnarounds" were cutting their losses by selling wagons worth \$125 for only \$10. The next year, a cold, dry season made it nearly impossible for travelers to keep stock alive. Some who listened to the reports of suffering along the trail and disillusionment in the gold-fields turned their wagons around and headed back east. The grim trail conditions severely strained even the most well-planned organizations. Even though wagon trains were often organized under written charters that established quasi-military leadership and strict rules, many disbanded when infighting broke out.

Hyde had done such a persuasive job of bragging about the many advantages of Kanesville for outfitting gold miners, that the hopeful and the greedy traveled to the Missouri banks by the thousands. But Kanesville's Mormons were unprepared for the encroaching sea of worldliness washing over their community as the gold rush gained momentum. Steamboats from St. Louis brought emigrants ready to buy provisions, but they also brought prostitution, whiskey, and cholera. "Gold-crazy men" and river gamblers left the Mississippi in favor of the booming gambling trade along the banks of the Missouri. The prosperity from trade and commerce with emigrating Gentiles threatened the Saints' hope for a tranquil place to worship.

Wrestling with this mixed blessing, Hyde struggled to present Kanesville as a lively, prospering outfitting community as well as a Mormon refuge where crime, depravity and vice would not be tolerated. The *Guardian* denounced the "unprincipled characters" who spent their nights stealing and their days



**ENSIGN OF THE WEST.****GRAND EXHIBITION**

AT THE

**NEW STORE**

OF

**J. A. KELTING & CO.**

Performances every day in the week—Sundays excepted.

**Admittance Free—Children half price.**The subscribers are now receiving and exhibiting to an "admirable public" the best assortment of  
**GOODS**

Ever offered to the citizens of the Independent State of Iowa. Among which may be found: Broadcloths, Cassimeres, Satinets, Jeans, Bleached and Brown Muslins, Gingham, Cashmeres, Prints, Alpacas, Linens, Cambrics, Laces, Edgings, Ribbons, &amp;c., &amp;c.

*Hats, Caps, Boots and Shoes,***READY MADE CLOTHING** of every description—from a three dollar suit up to the "Height of Extravagance," suited to the taste of the most fastidious old bachelor that ever cast sheep's eyes on the fair of the Land.

Also a splendid assortment of

*Fancy Goods, Hardware and Cutlery.***Salt Lake and California Emigrants,** Supplied with every article wanted on the journey, at as cheap rates as at any place west of New York.In short they intend their establishment shall not be behind the first houses in the country in point of variety and cheapness. All in want of Goods are invited to call and examine for themselves, as nothing will be charged for showing goods at the  
**ENSIGN OF THE WEST.**

Kanesville, (Council Bluffs,) Iowa, Jan. 15 1850

From jeans and brown muslins to edgings and ribbons, the proprietor of Kanesville's Ensign of the West promised "the best assortment of GOODS Ever offered to the citizens of the independent State of Iowa." Obviously, Hyde depended heavily on advertising revenue, and the number of ads doubled by the *Frontier Guardian's* second year.

auctioning stolen property. Hyde warned that "loungers" were not welcome: "May the *Guardian* ever continue to encourage industry and economy—to suppress vice and promote virtue—to exalt the honest and industrious,—and to scourge and abase the vicious, the idle, and such as are too short of good and redeeming qualities!"

Despite his obvious frustration with Gentile "loungers" and his moral apprehension of the gold rush, Hyde continued to promote Kanesville as a full-service outfitting town. Those folks foolhardy and godless enough to seek worldly riches and forsake those found in the human heart went with Hyde's best wishes. After all, who could complain when ads filled a fourth of the *Guardian* by 1850, and all ten of Kanesville's larger stores sold virtually all of their merchandise during the emigration season.

Yet the *Guardian* often printed conflicting messages concerning the wisdom of venturing to the goldfields. One optimistic report stated that "chunks of gold in California grow bigger and more of them every day." More common were reports of the desolation—of 2,000 people living in tents or crude log huts, many dying of exposure before an ounce of gold was discovered. "But such is the excitement and rage for gold that they undergo the most unheard of hardships," the *Guardian* noted. Letters and articles reported abundant gold but "distress . . . for want of the common necessities of life," of "men loaded with gold" but "clothed in filthy and tattered garments." Describing the violence and lawlessness, Hyde pondered, "Who will keep order among the miners?" Would no one grow food, he wondered, where miners were "famishing for a little bread while wading in gold dust." Amidst stealing, fighting, drinking, and shooting, he predicted, "blackeyes and bloody noses will be more common than bread."

As a religious leader, Orson Hyde was troubled by the greed inherent in gold digging, and his editorials often preached messages such as if "the true God of heaven" had been "sought with half the zeal and perseverance" as gold, the world would be united in one, big heaven-bound family. Gold, he feared, was disastrous to morality.

The church elders in Salt Lake shared Hyde's reservations. Brigham Young found it difficult to curb the enthusiasm of his followers tempted to forsake the Church in favor of the golden promise of California. He warned the faithful to stay put or their leave would



### **Request.**

Will the proprietors of all the ferries across the Missouri River on the western border of Pottawattamie county, keep an account of the number of wagons they cross over during the season, with the average number of men to each wagon as nearly as a close observation will allow them?

### **Californians.**

The number of these adventurers is far greater than the most enthusiastic among us anticipated.—We have ten large stores in the place, and our merchants received pr. last boats, liberal supplies: but they are now out of nearly all the staple articles, and are gone for more. There is one continual stream of emigrants pouring into this county.—They have many fine and valuable horses, oxen and cows without number. The weather is dry and generally very cold for the season, and no grass yet.

What we are all coming to is rather difficult to tell. It is hoped that we may have rain and warm weather soon.

Two *Guardian* notices in May 1850 attest to the stream of emigrants through town, and Hyde's efforts to count them.

be permanent. This message was passed on to the Kanesville Mormons through epistles in the *Guardian*.

Thus, over the course of a few years, as Kanesville attracted more than Mormons, Hyde increasingly had to balance church doctrine with commercial concerns. Elder Hyde was a loyal, dedicated church leader committed to recruiting converts and leading the faithful to Utah. Editor Hyde, on the other hand, was committed to Kanesville, where his clout was considerable, and he grew reluctant to pull up stakes.

Meanwhile, elders in Salt Lake felt a growing sense of urgency to round up the Mormon emigrants straggling behind and to unite all in the Valley settlement. They feared that given the distance between Kanesville and Salt Lake, with enough time and autonomy Hyde and his flock might settle permanently in Iowa. Although Hyde continued to encourage Mormons to move to Salt Lake, he seemed personally inclined to postpone and perhaps ignore the inevitable. That was until Brigham Young sent an epistle through the *Guardian* in late 1851, saying "We have been calling to the Saints in Pottawattamie, ever since we left them, to come away; but there has continually been an op-

posing spirit whispering, 'Stay another year, and get a better outfit.' . . . What are you waiting for? . . . We wish you to evacuate Pottawattamie."

The message was heard, loud and clear. Mormons in the Kanesville area finally prepared to move to Utah. They would be leaving behind an established outfitting town with thriving businesses, and homesteads with acres of rich, cultivated land. To finance the trek, Mormon holdings would have to be sold. Editor Hyde now donned the hat of real estate broker and set about the business of promoting the area as an outstanding investment. In November 1851, the *Guardian* announced: "Pottawattamie County for Sale," including the "valuable claims and improvements of that portion of this County owned and occupied by the Mormon population." The *Guardian* emphasized: "Remember that Kanesville is a valuable point. . . . destined to be the outfitting post on the western frontier for Oregon, Salt Lake, and California emigrants. The soil is productive, and a home market for everything that can be produced from soil."

In his most colorful booster language, Hyde exclaimed that Kanesville was "the best point for producing in all the West, and the best market on the Frontier. Now is the time for purchasers:—Strike while the 'Iron is hot' and secure a fortune while you can."

In early 1852 even the *Guardian* was sold, to attorney Jacob Dawson. Hyde lamented that Dawson was not a Mormon, but he conceded that the new editor appeared to be "liberal minded." Starting in March 1852, Dawson would publish his newly titled *Frontier Guardian and Iowa Sentinel* as a weekly.

Hyde waxed poetic in his final "Valedictory" column: "Having therefore seen friend Dawson fully installed in office, seated upon the tripod, and wielding the goose-quill scepter, we feel like making our bow and withdrawing from the Sanctum, bequeathing our mantle and best wishes upon our worthy successor, after having managed and conducted the *Guardian* three years and one month. But this office, having enlisted our deepest interests and good will, cannot fail





SHSI (IOWA CITY). FROM ROUTE FROM LIVERPOOL TO GREAT SALT LAKE VALLEY, ED. JAMES LINFORTH (1855)



Eventually, Mormon elder Orson Hyde left behind Kaneshville, leading the remaining Saints across the Missouri River and westward to join Mormons already at the Great Salt Lake. Here, artist Frederick Piercy's engraving, "Council Bluffs Ferry & group of Cotton-wood trees."

to command our respect and attention while we remain in the country; and when nothing of more interest can be found to fill the columns of the paper, we may scribble a little now and then for the *Guardian and Sentinel*, to benefit, arrange and order our emigration,— and other matters that may be interesting."

In an 1850 *Frontier Guardian* editorial, Hyde had described the components of an editor as "the constitution of a horse, obstinacy of a mule, independence of a wood sawyer, pertinacity of a dun, endurance of a starving anaconda, impudence of a beggar, and entire resignation to the most confounded of all earthly treadmills; and he must be a moving target for every body to shoot at, and is expected to know everything, and to assist 'busybodies' to pry into the business of their neighbors. If he does not come up to this description he cannot be thought a 'good editor.'"

Indeed, Orson Hyde had acquired most of these traits as *Guardian* editor. He was obstinate, independent, impudent, and happily resigned to the earthly treadmill of the frontier editor. He also recognized the role he and the *Guardian* had played in building a community, encouraging commerce, and inspiring his followers. He wrote: "Like the elements of animal life that are ever in motion, an Editor's pen often moves individuals, and sometimes whole communities."

Although the *Guardian's* religious purposes made it somewhat unique in frontier journalism, the *Guardian*, like hundreds of frontier newspapers, had helped meet the enormous need for information created by the mass movement of settlers across the nation. Rugged flat-bed presses made the overland trip with enterprising individuals, and newspapers served as the most basic reading material available to frontier Americans, second perhaps only to the Bible or almanacs. Certainly, the *Frontier Guardian* had earned its place among the great booster papers on the Missouri River. And without the *Guardian*, Kaneshville in all probability would have faded into obscurity as a temporary Mormon encampment.

Though Hyde continued as a Mormon leader in the Southwest, he would never again publish a newspaper. And as Kaneshville evolved into the thriving non-Mormon town of Council Bluffs, the *Frontier Guardian* was replaced by the *Iowa Sentinel* and later the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*. Yet the *Guardian* is noteworthy for the slice of history chronicled on its pages. Through the eyes of editor Orson Hyde, the reader shares Hyde's vision of the mid-1800s, the gold rush and westward migration, and the lives of Mormon emigrants temporarily stranded on the banks of the Missouri. The vision is intensely personal, and like the newspapers of that era, seldom objective. ♦

Jean Trumbo is an assistant professor at the Reynolds School of Journalism, University of Nevada, Reno, where she teaches visual communication and multimedia design.

#### NOTE ON SOURCES

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